

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 193241

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SUMMARY BACKUP CABLE

FOLL REPEAT ASMARA 776 ACTION SECSTATE ADDIS ABABA INFO

SECDEF CINCEUR USNAVNEUR COMIDEASTFOR

SEPTEMBER 27 QUOTE

O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 776

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652 : XGDS (2)

TAGS : PINS, ASEC

SUBJ : ELF SPECTACULAR IN ASMARA

REF : ASMARA 748

1. AT ABOUT 1900 LOCAL SEPT 27 ELF STAGED DRAMATIC
SPECTACULAR IN ASMARA OPENING AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE IN
VARIOUS PARTS OF CITY INCLUDING AREAS OF PALACE,
SECOND DIVISION HQ. AND MILITARY OFFICERS BARRACKS,
AS WELL AS DOWNTOWN AREAS.

2. APPARENTLY THERE WERE NO PARTICULAR TARGETS AND
NO VIPS HAVE BEEN INJURED AS FAR AS KNOWN. I HAVE
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TELEPHONED GOVGEN INFORMING HIM I HAD HEARD PALACE

WAS TARGET WITH REPORTS INDICATING POSSIBLE USE OF ROCKETS OR MORTARS. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN SHOOTING IN VICINITY OF PALACE BUT THAT THERE WERE NO ROCKETS OR MORTARS AND THERE WAS NO SERIOUS DAMAGE. I ALSO HAVE HELD TELECONS WITH COMMANDING GENERAL OF SECOND DIVISION AND COMMANDING GENERAL OF SPECIAL POLICE WHO HAVE REPORTED EVERYTHING NOW UNDER CONTROL.

3. EVENTS BEGAN ABOUT 1900 WITH EXTENSIVE AND WIDE-SPREAD GUNFIRE HEARD THROUGHOUT ASMARA. THIS CONTINUED FOR ALMOST ONE HOUR. CG SECOND DIV AND CG POLICE SAID MUCH OF SOUND OF GUNFIRE WAS RETALIATORY. CASUALTIES KNOWN SO FAR INCLUDE ONE SOLDIER KILLED AND FIVE WOUNDED, PLUS ONE CIVILIAN KILLED AND SEVEN WOUNDED (INCLUDING ONE ITALIAN SHOT IN LEG). IN ADDITION, ONE AMERICAN WAS GRAZED IN KNEE, NOT SERIOUSLY. THERE MAY HAVE BEEN OTHER CASUALTIES NOT YET REPORTED.

4. CG POLICE SAID ELF HAD CIRCULATED LEAFLETS AND RUMORS YESTERDAY SAYING SEPT 27 HOLIDAY (MASCAL, OR FINDING OF TRUE CROSS) WOULD BE "DAY OF DECISION" AND THAT ELF WOULD DEMONSTRATE SHOW OF FORCE. CEREMONY THIS MORNING ATTENDED BY CONGEN AND LEADING OFFICIALS REFLECTED FACT THAT PEOPLE HAD RECEIVED MESSAGE, AND ATTENDANCE WAS ONLY ABOUT HALF OF LAST YEAR. SECURITY AT CEREMONY WAS EXTENSIVE, AND ELF PROBABLY CONCLUDED ANY ATTEMPTED ACTION THERE WOULD BE SUICIDAL. ACCORDINGLY, ACTION THIS EVENING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PERFORMED TO DEMONSTRATE TO PEOPLE OF CITY THAT ELF HAD CAPABILITY TO BACK ITS THREATS WITH ACTUAL SHOW OF FORCE.

5. CG POLICE SAID HE ALSO HAD HAD REPORT THAT ABOUT 150 ARMED ELF WOULD BE IN CITY FOR TERRORIST ACTION SEPT 27. HOWEVER, CG SECOND DIV SAID GROUP CONDUCTING ACTION PROBABLY WAS NO LARGER THAN 18, DIVIDED INTO SUBGROUPS OF THREE. REALITY IS PROBABLY SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN, AND FURTHER REPORT WILL BE SUBMITTED WHEN MORE DEFINITIVE INFO IS AVAILABLE.

6. MEANWHILE, EARLY ALERTED CO KAGNEW AND COMMANDERS OF DET-3 AND STONEHOUSE TO TAKE PRUDENT PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR PROTECTION OF SITES AND PERSONNEL. STONEHOUSE APPARENTLY OVER-REACTED (RCI 27014) AND PS PREPARED FOR EMERGENCY DESTRUCTION BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN INITIATED ACCORDING TO LATEST REPORT, AND
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SITUATION IN STONEHOUSE AREA IS AT PRESENT QUIET.

7. CG POLICE AND CG SECOND DIVISION HAVE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT PURPOSE MR ELF ACTION WAS TO CREATE PANIC AMONG POPULATION AND THAT THIS SUCCEEDED FOR BRIEF PERIOD BUT THAT ALL IS NOW UNDER CONTROL.

8. SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE WILL MEET SEPT 28 AFTER WHICH FUR-

THER REPORT WILL BE SUBMITTED. MEANWHILE AMERICANCOMMUNITY IS SAFE
AND THERE IS NO CAUSE FOR ALARM.
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